

Town of Bloomfield  
Economic Development Commission Meeting  
800 Bloomfield Avenue, Conference Room #5  
WEDNESDAY, November 16, 2016  
APPROVED MINUTES

**Present:** Jerry Long, Bonnie Bercowetz, Michelle Bononi, Jerry Katrichis, Harold Harper, and Lenny Hudgen.

Also present: Director of Planning and Economic Development, José Giner, Phil Schenck, Town Manager, Rob Rowson, Don Poland, and Laura James, Recording Secretary

1. Chairman Long called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

2. **Minutes of August 23, 2016 regular meeting**

*Commissioner Katrichis made a motion to accept the minutes of October 18, 2016. Commissioner Bononi seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.*

3. **Public Comment**

No comments

4. **Continued Discussion of EDC mission statement and its implementation**

Commissioner Katrichis stated that “increasing revenue” as part of the mission statement is a concern and hopefully not the objective.

Commissioner Bercowetz stated that she had emailed a modified version of the Mission statement with some amendments yesterday evening.

*Commissioner Bononi made a motion to accept the prepared mission statement to include the agreed upon amendments and delete increasing revenue and insert the tax base. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Harper and passed unanimously.*

5. **Goman & York – update and preliminary thoughts on Town Center Parking**

- a. Bloomfield Center Business Alliance Update: Rob Rowson
- b. Business Visits and Attraction: Dave Driver
- c. Parking and Other Planning Issues: Don Poland
- d. Marketing Update: Mike Goman

Mr. Rowson stated that the next meeting for the Center Business Alliance will be Monday, November 28, 2016 at 8:30 a.m. at Carbones Kitchen. Mr. Rowson stated that he met with Phil Schenck, Don Poland, and Mike Goman to discuss improvements to the Town Green. Mr. Rowson also stated that he is waiting for pending information from the State and has submitted a revised itemized list of possible capital improvements to Mr. Schenck.

Mr. Rowson stated that Ace Hardware is closing after twenty two months in Town. Mr. Rowson stated that he spoke with the owner and they are closing because of lack of traffic. He stated that their average daily customers were about fifty people. He also cited the physical condition of the Amazing Plaza as a concern.

Commissioner Bercowetz stated that the owner knew the physical condition before moving in.

Mr. Rowson stated that few economics were shared. The owner does hold a five year lease and is walking away after only twenty two months. Commissioner Hudgen stated that he didn't see

any advertising or build-up before the store opened. Mr. Hudgen also stated that a traffic study should have been done initially along with a marketing campaign.

Mr. Poland stated that they are working on a number of leads. Mr. Poland also stated that there was an article in the Hartford Courant regarding Swift Textile because of Mr. Driver's efforts. Mr. Poland stated that the parking and planning proposal will be sent to Mr. Giner this week and will be ready for discussion at next meeting.

Mr. Schenck stated that an article on Bloomfield will be in the Hartford Business Journal which will be out on Monday.

Mr. Poland stated that the flyer "Bloomfield Means Business" was completed and 500 distributed around Town.

Commissioner Bononi asked why the EDC wasn't asked for input with layout and content. Mr. Rowson stated that he sent information regarding flyer to Mr. Giner and it's up to Mr. Giner who receives after that. Mr. Giner stated that he made comments and sent back to Goman & York. Mr. Schenck discussed how deeply the EDC wants to be involved administratively. Mr. Schenck also discussed how the Town of Bloomfield logo came into existence.

#### **6. Staff and Commission Member Updates on Various Topics of Interest**

- a. Tax Abatement and TIF Policy
- b. New and ongoing construction
- c. Wintonbury Mall
- d. Filley Park
- e. Other topics (economic trends, jobs, unemployment, etc)
- f. Discussion and Approval of Schedule of Meetings for 2017

Mr. Giner stated that the Virtual Town Hall new website will be coming on-line on Monday. Mr. Giner asked the Commission to take a look at EDC's page. The new website will allow people to be able to get agenda's and minutes of all meetings. There was further discussion regarding posting of minutes for different Commissions and Committees.

Mr. Giner stated that the Land Use Sub-Committee met last night and Tax Abatement Policy was a topic of discussion. The consensus at the meeting was to proceed with any request that the Commission gets, and will be guided by the draft abatement policy because there is no formal policy change yet.

Commissioner Bononi asked Mr. Giner for a brief general definition of Tax Abatement Policy. Chairman Long asked Mr. Giner to document the definition and send by email to EDC. There was further discussion regarding EDC's role in developing an abatement policy, and whether to grant tax abatement to businesses; and what the financial impact will be to the Town.

*Commissioner Bercowetz made a motion to place on the agenda for discussion of the EDC's role in commenting on Tax Abatement Policy with the Land Use Sub-Committee. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Harper and passed. Commissioner Long opposed.*

#### **Discussion of Motion**

Commissioner Bononi stated that everyone on the EDC should be working to hammer out a policy, someone must do the work and it is not being done.

Chairman Long stated that the motion should be broader than tax abatements. It should be extended to everything the Sub-Committee is looking at.

Commissioner Bercowetz stated that the expertise of the EDC is business, which some other Commissions may not have. Commissioner Bercowetz also stated that the EDC must remember which Commission is doing what.

Mr. Schenck stated that the EDC should come up with about five points as to why the Commission would support tax abatements based on certain criteria rather than concentrating on detailed wording. He stated that the Council will take into consideration the various opinions received from all parties, some of which will be vastly different.

Mr. Giner reported that the apartments are going up fast and that they had received all permits. He also reported that Building inspections are fast and furious and both building officials are working overtime. He had nothing new to report regarding Wintonbury Mall. Mr. Giner stated that Phase II was set to begin next summer at Filley Park.

Mr. Giner also stated that the EDC may want to put on agenda an item regarding whether the Town should consider being involved in small business loans for startups. This item comes at the request of the Town Council's Land Use/Economic Development Subcommittee.

The EDC meeting schedule for 2017 passed out. Mr. Giner stated that if there were no objection he will submit it to the Town Clerk.

Mr. Giner stated that if EDC has any budget ideas it can be discussed for submission to Council. Commissioner Bononi asked Mr. Rowson about the area of focus for the Center Business Alliance. Mr. Rowson stated that the Center area goes up Mountain Road to Ocean State Job Lot and North to Geissler's and east to Amazing Plaza.

***Commissioner Bercowetz made a motion to approve the 2017 EDC Meeting Schedule. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Katrichis and passed unanimously.***

#### **7. Public Comment**

Mr. David Mann, stated that the EDC's mission statement doesn't address job readiness and education which is an important linkage. He also felt that it is extremely important for EDC to take a position on the Tax Abatement Policy.

Mr. Chip Caton, 59 Duncaster Road, Mr. Caton stated that the EDC should be upset regarding the "Bloomfield Means Business" brochure appearing without input. He felt that the EDC is the marketing commission for the Town. Mr. Caton stated that despite all efforts you have a marketing piece that the EDC didn't have any input in. Mr. Caton further stated that the cover of the brochure implies that you want restaurants as your primary focus- he would have put Cigna or Kaman on the Cover- not a restaurant. He also stated that the design looks like it's from 1960's. Mr. Caton further stated that he is glad only 500 were printed. The brochure is not unique to Bloomfield and hopes EDC will have a more direct involvement in whatever comes next.

#### **8. Adjournment**

***Commissioner Harper made a motion to adjourn at 10:15 a.m. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Katrichis and passed unanimously.***